



Gender Equality for Good Governance

Concept Note

Side Event at the 74th UN General Assembly:

Achieving the SDGs: Women Leaders as Changemakers in Local Governance

Background

The United Nations celebrated the adoption of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015; the Global Goals if realised, will create a more peaceful, just and sustainable world for all. Sustainable development and promotion of inclusive and responsive governance go hand in hand. Good governance centers on achieving equity, transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability and the rule of law; aspects which are crucial for human development. Sustained progress has been underpinned by good governance and women's empowerment and hampered by their absence.

Gender equality and women's empowerment cut across the 2030 Agenda while specifically Goal 5 focusses on achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls. Within Goal 5, target 5.5 centre stages women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Beyond goal 5, highlighting the cross-cutting nature of equality in participation and representation the SDGs also highlight on the need to focus on "Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels" (SDG target 16.7). The Government of India has already paved the way for this in 1993 through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) by recognizing the panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) and urban local bodies (ULBs) as local self-governments. Since then the Government of India and various state governments have taken several steps towards realization of the goals of local democracy as envisaged in the Constitution. One of the most recent and critical initiatives in this regard is the adoption of the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) and the accompanying requirement to formulate Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP). The streamlined approach to targeting

the most marginalized and development deficit districts through the aspirational district development strategy is also a critical step towards achieving inclusive and overall development.

Commitments towards Inclusive Governance

In the Panchayati Raj system in the country, affirmative action through its 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, resulted in the minimum of 33.3% per cent of seats for women in the local governance structures of the country. 20 Indian states have the reservation at 50%; more than 70% of the Indian population residing in the rural areas are governed by 30 million elected representatives, 46% of which are women. This is the largest absolute number of women in grassroots politics, globally.

Affirmative Action in favor of women in Panchayat ensures equal representation of women in planning and decision making in local governance, resulting in provision of equitable delivery of local public goods to disadvantaged groups at the panchayat level. Research has revealed a strong correlation between participatory governance and decisions on social issues.

The PRIs, administratively and because of their proximity to the local communities makes them an important structure to engage with. The PRI structure led by women can play a crucial role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Union Government of India has renewed its commitment towards strengthening of governance institutions, on multiple occasions and platforms. The Prime Minister’s address to the country at the 2016 Independence Day ceremony reflected on the status of women and their access to resources, voice, choice and power, and made very visible connections between effective governance and the status of women; ending violence against women, promoting women’s role in effective delivery of goods and services and promoting women’s economic security and livelihood.

FACTS & FIGURES – Gender Responsive Governance

- India has the largest number of poor people in the world – 270 million (World Bank).
- India ranked 148/190 globally on Women in Politics by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women (2017); with only 12 % of women in the lower house and 11% of women in the upper house of parliament.
- Budgets for gender equality and women’s empowerment comprised only 5% of the Government of India’s overall budget for 2018-19.
- Allocations to panchayats increased by 228 % based on recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission – an opportunity to develop Gram Panchayat Development Plans using GRG for effective and equitable delivery of public services.
- India’s **Digital India Programme** set to connect 2.5 million Gram Panchayats with high-speed internet by 2018 (World Economic Forum).

Prospects and Challenges

While the advances in women’s representation in governance and its positive effect on service provision and inclusive development are recognised and well documented; on the ground gender bias continues to be a reality.

India boasts of 14.26 lakhs (1.43 million) Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in PRIs, which constitute 46.1% of total Elected Representatives (ERs) as of 1 January 2018. Globally, this is the largest number of women in elected positions in local governance. Despite this extensive presence of women in grassroots governance, their participation in decision making is still limited because of:

- discrimination
- lack of access to information
- the double burden faced by women at work and at home
- deeply etched inequalities
- social stigmas
- political barriers
- limited efforts to equip EWRs with requisite skills

For achieving India's vision of a transparent and efficient governance, focus must be on delivery and accessibility of public services to the poor, vulnerable and marginalised. An effective delivery of public programs is likely to have a direct impact on growth via poverty reduction and correcting historical inequities through equitable distribution of resources.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) UN Women Partnership

The UN Women MoPR programme has worked towards strengthening and engendering the mechanisms of local governance. A Memorandum of Understanding establishing the partnership has been signed to promote equal political participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), with a focus on building capacities of individual duty bearers including Elected Women Representatives. The partnership targets towards participatory design of governance processes and effective implementation of laws, policies and programmes to promote gender responsive governance and further their shared mission of good governance, gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Under the current phase of the near decade long collaboration; at the national level, premier institutions like the LBSNAA, Mussorie and NIRD&PR, Hyderabad have partnered with the programme to develop specialised resource pool on gender and tools of gender responsive governance. This has been supported by empirical research to evaluate and identify entry points for gender in the design and implementation of the various policy frameworks.

At the State levels, the capacity development and institutional strengthening initiatives have resulted in trainings of more than 200,000 PRI functionaries, officials, motivators in cascade mode supported by the State Governments. Some other notable results have been initiating innovative and convergent model of governance such as the Gender Friendly Panchayat; drafting of guidelines and protocols for conducting Mahila Sabhas; and the organisation of more than 200 Mahila Sabhas and 1000 Gram Sabhas in 16 districts of five states.

The primary objective of these special Sabhas has been to ensure that women’s concerns are integrated in the local discourse, that would feed into the process of local planning and resultant decision making. Government of Rajasthan made Mahila Sabha meetings mandatory in three districts of Rajasthan because of this effort.



Signing of MoU between MoPR and UN Women



Advanced training of Resource Persons for Gender Responsive Governance at LBSNAA, Mussorie



Mahila Sabha in Progress at district Alwar, Rajasthan

Side Event at the 74th UN General Assembly: Achieving the SDGs: Women Leaders as Changemakers in Local Governance

As part of the partnership with UN Women, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (Local Governance) of the Government of India will be convening an event on the sidelines of the 74th UN General Assembly, to showcase the model of local governance in India, rooted in the constitution; and the affirmative action that has resulted in 1.4 million women leaders working towards the socio-economic betterment of rural India that will ultimately be key in achieving the SDGs at the national and global levels.

The event is organized in alignment with the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, mandated to follow up and review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs.

The dialogue will discuss on the role of women leaders in local governance in achieving the SDGs.

Key stakeholders:

The Dialogue, a forum to share global best practices and cross-learning, will benefit its key stakeholders in adapting best practices to their national and sub-national policies. Representatives of governments from Global North as well as Global South, particularly from ministries concerning local governance, gender and women's development, members of academia and civil society, as well as international agencies will gain from the platform. The fourth and global pillar, the media, will also be critical to the dissemination of on ground challenges to the implementation of SDGs and the impact of adapting global best practices through the inclusion of women's political participation.

Key Takeaways:

The key takeaways from the Dialogue will be :

1. to showcase the Indian model of democratic local governance and results of affirmative action in promoting women in decision making
2. innovative institutional mechanisms that have delivered on the objective inclusive and responsive local governance

Proposed Agenda:

Keynote speech

Honourable Minister, Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Government of India

Thought Sharing and voices of changemakers

Women leaders as Changemakers in local governance towards achieving the SDGs (*dialogue moderated by Ms. Nishtha Satyam, Deputy Representative, UN Women*)

1. Mahila Sabha as an innovative mechanism for convergence, empowerment and decision making:

Speakers: Representative from MoPR and an Elected Women Representative (EWR)

2. Elected Women representatives (EWRs) of Panchayats: Towards a more inclusive and responsive governance:
Speakers: Prof Maxine Weisgrau, Adjunct Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University
3. Gender Friendly Panchayat: Institutional mechanisms to establish models of inclusion and gender responsiveness at the village level:
Speaker: Dr. W.R Reddy, DG NIRD&PR
4. PRI-CBO Convergence as critical instruments of inclusive Governance:
Speakers: Kudumbshree and EWR